Sweet and Holy Spirits

Pentecost Year C || June 8, 2025 || 9:30am St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Hanover, MA || Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104:25-35, 37; Romans 8:14-17; John 14:8-17, (25-27) || The Reverend Amy Whitcomb Slemmer, Esq.

Welcome to a gloriously wonderful Sunday service at St. Andrew's! This is our celebration of Pentecost and WOW have a lot of hearts and hands gone into making this service and our gathering this morning special! Thank you Patrice and Mark, Becky and Adam for bringing back the tradition of these beautiful doves, thank you Sean and the members of the choir - for the great music, and thank George and your loved ones, and Kelly and YOUR loved ones who are making the baptisms happen today!

We gather in love to celebrate these beginnings and to honor the pauses – not endings. This is Sean's last Sunday service with us for the school program year. He is taking the summer off and we will be blessed with a summer sub, Dr. Mijin Choi to accompany us and our Pick Up choir and Sean's leadership and steadiness will be missed!

I was offered an unexpected gift this week in the form of a probing question – that I must say was VERY quickly followed by an apology, an unnecessary apology, to be clear! The question was "What is the big deal with Pentecost, I don't get it!?!" and when I took a deep breath and launched in to what I had intended to be a fascinating, if not compelling description of the "Pente" being 50 – we mark 50 days after the resurrection and then I described the scene that we've just heard – in multiple languages – from the book of ACTS, I was halted by the follow up interjection which was somewhere along the lines of – "but you don't really believe all that, do you?"

And I confessed, that actually I do. I actually do believe that there was a gathering and at some mystical moment, there was a wind and the clearing of biases, language barriers and cultural differences (a holy moment we could well use now).....the underlying conversation

became a pretty wonderful and rich exchange about core beliefs and lived experiences, and I think we each were happy with the outcome.

It is among the greatest privileges to listen to people's religious questions and to hear stories about their experiences in this church and beyond.

I also thought it was perfectly fitting to ask those profound questions this week, as we are joyfully welcoming young George and baby Kelly into the body of Christ! We are excited to hear their questions and to learn from their experiences. They are being baptized on a Sunday when our scripture reading includes the disciples – and specifically Philip being chided by Jesus. Philip asks for what I imagine we ALL ask at some point "show me yourself – show me God, and I'll believe", and Jesus, who essentially says - "I'm RIGHT HERE!" is a bit grumpy. After all this time, he laments – you STILL don't get it.

Do you still not know me? OH PHILIP! Jesus goes on to teach his listeners and us about his relationship with his father AND the arrival of our holy mediator – the Holy Spirit! Had I been in Philip's place, I think I would have found a cave and stuck my head or whole body in it.

However, the lesson for Philip, offered for us this morning – and the lesson for our community to convey repeatedly to George and sweet Kelly is to ask questions. Keep asking and testing and considering ... "Do you STILL not get it?" That's ok. Its a LOT! – let's work on it together. Even while frustrated, Jesus still loves Philip. And, I'd like to think that even in that earliest interaction between Jesus, Philip and the other unnamed bystanders, Jesus understood that everyone learns differently. Perhaps as he was trying to remove the exasperation or edge from his voice, Jesus offered the news about the pending arrival of the Holy Spirit – God's presence on earth that would be with them, even after Jesus returned to heaven to sit at God's right hand. We are gifted with the Holy Spirit – our holy mediator – our divine advocate who is with us always.

In a few minutes, we are going to join together and with love and determination and following the ancient ritual of the church, we are going to do as John the Baptist did for Jesus. We are going to baptize Kelly and George into the household of Christ.

We are also going to remind ourselves of what that means – as we affirm our own baptismal promises and covenant to renounce evil, to turn toward God and to live in love with one another and with God's creation.

Those are challenging promises that have been made and affirmed again and again in this sanctuary.

George's grandmother Jackie affirmed her baptismal covenant in this space many times, and we are grateful that her faith and, perhaps her celebration of life, are linked to our presence here together this morning.

The echoes of this morning's promises, and the beauty that we are all working to create in the world will be available to Kelly and George as they grow and their questions, needs and concerns become more complex.

That is what we are doing – making pretty steep and challenging promises, and we know as grownups, take practice! Most importantly, we are promising to love and listen to George and Kelly and to Marc and Alycia, Elizabeth, Susanna and Michelle as well as Derick and Christine, Cynthia, KIimberly and Mitchell as they ask questions and navigate a world much more complicated than the one that confused our old and curious ancestor Philip.

May we continue our practice. May we ask complex and deep questions that enhance our faith. And let us return to this sanctuary to touch base and check in week after week committed to offering love where there is none, listening where there is brokenness and praying when we encounter hopelessness. And may we continue as witnesses to God's peace and love through Baptism including the blessings bestowed upon us and this world by sweet Kelly and George.

Amen+